# The Hatha Yoga Pradipika

The Original Sanskrit

Svatmarama

An English Translation

Brian Dana Akers

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Our Books

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YogaVidya.com

An important message to our readers:

The asanas in this book should not be attempted without the supervision of an experienced teacher or prior experience. Many of the other practices should not be attempted at all. The ideas expressed in this book should not be used to diagnose, prescribe, treat, cure, or prevent any disease, illness, or individual health problem. Consult your health care practitioner for individual health care. YogaVidya.com LLC shall not be liable for any direct, indirect, incidental, special, consequential, or punitive damages resulting from the use of this book.

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And would any of this have happened without Loretta?

For Owen & Virginia

# Contents

# Introduction

OVER THE last half millennium, one book has established itself as *the* classic work on Hatha Yoga—the book you are holding in your hands. An Indian yogi named Svatmarama wrote the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* in the fifteenth century C.E. Next to nothing is known about him, although his name may provide a clue. It means "one who delights in one's Atman," indicating the achievement of a state of bliss. Drawing on his own experience and older works now lost, he wrote this book for the student of Yoga. He wrote this book for you.

You've no doubt heard of Hatha Yoga. The word pradipika comes from the Sanskrit verb प्र + दीप् "to flame forth" and means a light, lamp, or lantern. Its extended meaning, since one is throwing light on a subject, is an explanation or commentary. Therefore, the title means "An Explanation of Hatha Yoga."

Even though I've worked hard to make it understandable, this book, like Yoga itself, will require some effort from you. It is chock-full of metaphors, synonyms, and analogies. (Perhaps it also contains a bit of hyperbole.) It is not a smooth, modern narrative, but rather an esoteric work, purposely oblique at times, from medieval India. Furthermore, I recommend that you learn Hatha Yoga under the guidance of an experienced teacher, not solely from this book. Some practices in this book I don't recommend at all.

(You'll know them when you read them.) This is nothing new. Looking at verses 2.37 and 3.22, you can see there have long been different opinions on what should and shouldn't be practiced.

This book is divided into four chapters. In chapter 1, Svatmarama salutes his teachers, says why he is writing this book, who he is writing it for, where and how Yoga should be practiced, describes fifteen asanas, and recommends dietary habits. In chapter 2, he establishes the connections between breath, mind, life, nadis, and prana, then describes the six karmans and the eight kumbhakas. In chapter 3, Svatmarama says what mudras are for, then describes the ten mudras. In chapter 4, he discusses samadhi, laya, nada, two mudras, and the four stages of Yoga.

The Sanskrit original is complete and correct. I carefully examined four previous editions of the text word by word—in fact, letter by letter—to produce the best, most aesthetically pleasing version of the original Sanskrit ever published. I favored more sandhi over less, and took the liberty of simplifying and standardizing the sentence that concludes each chapter. Lines and verses were grouped the way they were translated, but the numbering was left unchanged. I utilized Arabic numerals and left the translation unnumbered to avoid clutter. While including the Sanskrit for the benefit of scholars, students, and posterity, its inclusion—allowing easy comparison with the English—is also a statement of confidence in the quality of the translation.

The English translation is both accurate and accessible. To make it accurate, I stayed in the background and put myself at the service of the author and the text. I suppressed any urges to coin neologisms and employ fleeting usage, or to add my own comments and interpretations. The verse was made the unit of translation to stay off the slippery slope of paraphrase. Where the meaning is open to interpretation, I followed the tradition, specifically Brahmananda's *Jyotsna* commentary. Due to the ever-increasing

knowledge of the reading public, more words were left untranslated than would have been a quarter century ago. (You may want a dictionary of Yoga handy.) Some previous translators inexplicably suffocated the book's wonderful parallel constructions; I allowed them to breathe. The translation is gender neutral where appropriate, but many words in the original are gender—even anatomically—specific, and were left that way. Finally, almost every word in the original made it into the translation. Few were left out, and very few new words were added.

I did many things to make the translation accessible. I tried to use international standard written English and produce prose that is clear, concise, and direct. To that end, I often broke a long Sanskrit sentence into shorter English ones, typically changed the word order from subject-object-verb to subject-verb-object, favored the active voice over the passive, added the necessary punctuation, and occasionally moved the latter part of a line or verse to the beginning for a better flow. Diacritics, italics, and the heavy use of brackets were dispensed with to avoid the hyperdensity common in books on Indian philosophy. The transliteration system, therefore, is not perfect—both श and ष are represented by "sh," for example, and च is represented by "ch." (However, I retained the familiar Sri instead of going with Shri, and went with yogi instead of the more correct yogin.) I invite the stickler for spelling and pronunciation to learn Devanagari—it's a delightful writing system. Compounds are generally open to avoid long strings of unfamiliar letter combinations, although when compounded, the words bandha, mudra, kumbhaka, and karman are the final members of a closed compound for consistency within each category and with the asanas. I decided notes placed at the foot of the page—rather than at the end of the chapter, the end of the book, or in brackets within the translation—would be the least distracting and most convenient way for you to receive necessary bits of information. Lastly, I regularly changed the third person potential mood found in many descriptions to a

simple imperative. For example, in verse 1.20, "One should put the right ankle" becomes simply "Put the right ankle."

Knowing a few more things will make this book easier to follow. In Svatmarama's use of language, time equals death, nadis are rivers or streams, chakras are lotuses, sun and moon each refer to multiple things, and the fluid said to drip from a cavity in the skull is variously called soma, nectar, essence, juice, liquor, or crescent water. Kumbhaka means pranayama in general (verse 3.126), breath retention in particular (verse 2.71), and eight specific practices (verse 2.44). Objects means "objects of the senses," and "without objects" more literally means "independent" or "without support." Practices are almost always described before they are named. For example, Simhasana is described in verses 1.50 and 1.51, but not named until verse 1.52. Practices have also changed over the centuries, as have the names attached to them. Indeed, verse 1.37 gives four different names for one asana. In our photographs, we gave primacy to the (often terse and incomplete) descriptions in the book, then filled in the details according to current understanding of the asanas. Appreciation is extended to J. Prabhakara Sastry, who supervised my first attempt at translation in 1979, and to Ashok Aklujkar, who made many last-minute improvements to this effort. Neither is responsible for any remaining shortcomings.

Even keeping all of the above in mind, the meaning of some verses may remain opaque. Rest assured that the translation is complete, clear, and correct. This is an esoteric work from medieval India which describes mystical entities, practices, and states of consciousness. To come to a full realization of Yoga, you will need to study other books, learn from a teacher, and above all, practice.

Finally, you may be wondering if the things described in this book are "really true." I invite the scientifically minded to do some empirical research. In a peaceful country, in a quiet place, free of all anxieties…

प्रथमोपदेशः

Chapter One

# Asanas

श्री आदिनाथाय नमोऽस्तु तस्मै येनोपदिष्टा हठयोगविद्या ।
विभ्राजते प्रोन्नतराजयोगमारोढुमिच्छोरधिरोहिणीव ॥ 1

Salutations to Shiva, who taught the science of Hatha Yoga.
It is the aspirant's stairway to the heights of Raja Yoga.

प्रणम्य श्रीगुरुं नाथं स्वात्मारामेण योगिना ।
केवलं राजयोगाय हठविद्योपदिश्यते ॥ 2

Yogi Svatmarama, after saluting the Lord and guru,
explains the science of Hatha for one reason—Raja Yoga.

भ्रान्त्या बहुमतध्वान्ते राजयोगमजानताम् ।
हठप्रदीपिकां धत्ते स्वात्मारामः कृपाकरः ॥ 3

For those ignorant of Raja Yoga, wandering in the darkness of too many opinions, compassionate Svatmarama gives the light of Hatha.

हठविद्यां हि मत्स्येन्द्रगोरक्षाद्या विजानते ।

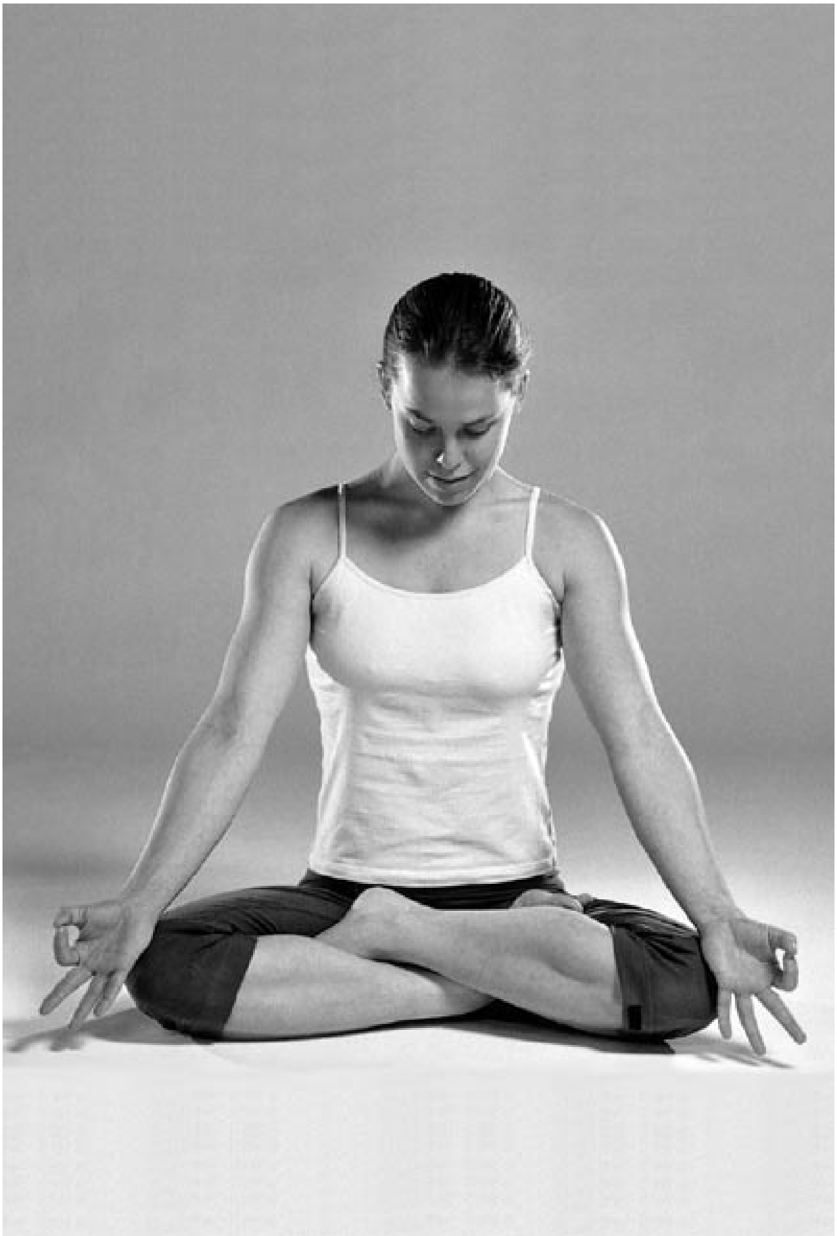
स्वात्मारामोऽथवा योगी जानीते तत्प्रसादतः ॥ 4

Matsyendra, Goraksha, and others know well the science of Hatha. By their grace, Yogi Svatmarama also knows it.

श्रीआदिनाथमत्स्येन्द्रशाबरानन्दभैरवाः ।
चौरङ्गीमीनगोरक्षविरूपाक्षबिलेशयाः ॥ 5
मन्थानो भैरवो योगी सिद्धिर्बुद्धश्च कन्थडिः ।
कोरण्टकः सुरानन्दः सिद्धपादश्च चर्पटिः ॥ 6
कानेरी पूज्यपादश्च नित्यनाथो निरञ्जनः ।
कपाली बिन्दुनाथश्च काकचण्डीश्वराह्वयः ॥ 7
अल्लामः प्रभुदेवश्च घोडाचोली च टिण्टिणिः ।
भानुकी नारदेवश्च खण्डः कापालिकस्तथा ॥ 8
इत्यादयो महासिद्धा हठयोगप्रभावतः ।
खण्डयित्वा कालदण्डं ब्रह्माण्डे विचरन्ति ते ॥ 9

Shiva, Matsyendra, Shabara, Anandabhairava, Chaurangi, Mina, Goraksha, Virupaksha, Bileshaya, Manthana, Bhairava, Siddhi, Buddha, Kanthadi, Korantaka, Surananda, Siddhapada, Charpati, Kaneri, Pujyapada, Nityanatha, Niranjana, Kapali, Bindunatha, Kakachandishvara, Allama Prabhudeva, Ghodacholi, Tintini, Bhanuki, Naradeva, Khanda, and Kapalika—these and other great masters, having conquered death through the power of Hatha Yoga, roam the universe.

अशेषतापतप्तानां समाश्रयमठो हठः ।



स्वस्तिकासन – Svastikasana

अशेषयोगयुक्तानामाधारकमठो हठः ॥ 10

Hatha is the sanctuary for those suffering every type of pain. It is the foundation for those practicing every type of Yoga.

हठविद्या परं गोप्या योगिना सिद्धिमिच्छता ।
भवेद्वीर्यवती गुप्ता निर्वीर्या तु प्रकाशिता ॥ 11

The science of Hatha should be kept top secret by the yogi desirous of success. It is potent when concealed and impotent when revealed.

सुराज्ये धार्मिके देशे सुभिक्षे निरुपद्रवे ।
धनुःप्रमाणपर्यन्ते शिलाग्निजलवर्जिते ।
एकान्ते मठिकामध्ये स्थातव्यं हठयोगिना ॥ 12

The Hatha yogi should live in a secluded hut free of stones, fire, and dampness to a distance of four cubits in a country that is properly governed, virtuous, prosperous, and peaceful.

अल्पद्वारमरन्ध्रगर्तविवरं नात्युच्चनीचायतं
सम्यग्गोमयसान्द्रलिप्तममलं निःशेषजन्तूज्झितम् ।
बाह्ये मण्डपवेदिकूपरुचिरं प्राकारसंवेष्टितं
प्रोक्तं योगमठस्य लक्षणमिदं सिद्धैर्हठाभ्यासिभिः ॥ 13



गोमुखासन – Gomukhasana

These are the marks of a Yoga hut as described by masters practicing Hatha: a small door, no windows, no rat holes; not too high, too low, or too long; well plastered with cow dung, clean, and bug free. The grounds are enclosed by a wall and beautified by an arbor, a raised platform, and a well.

एवंविधे मठे स्थित्वा सर्वचिन्ताविवर्जितः ।
गुरूपदिष्टमार्गेण योगमेव समभ्यसेत् ॥ 14

Living in this hut, free of all anxieties, one should earnestly practice Yoga as taught by one's guru.

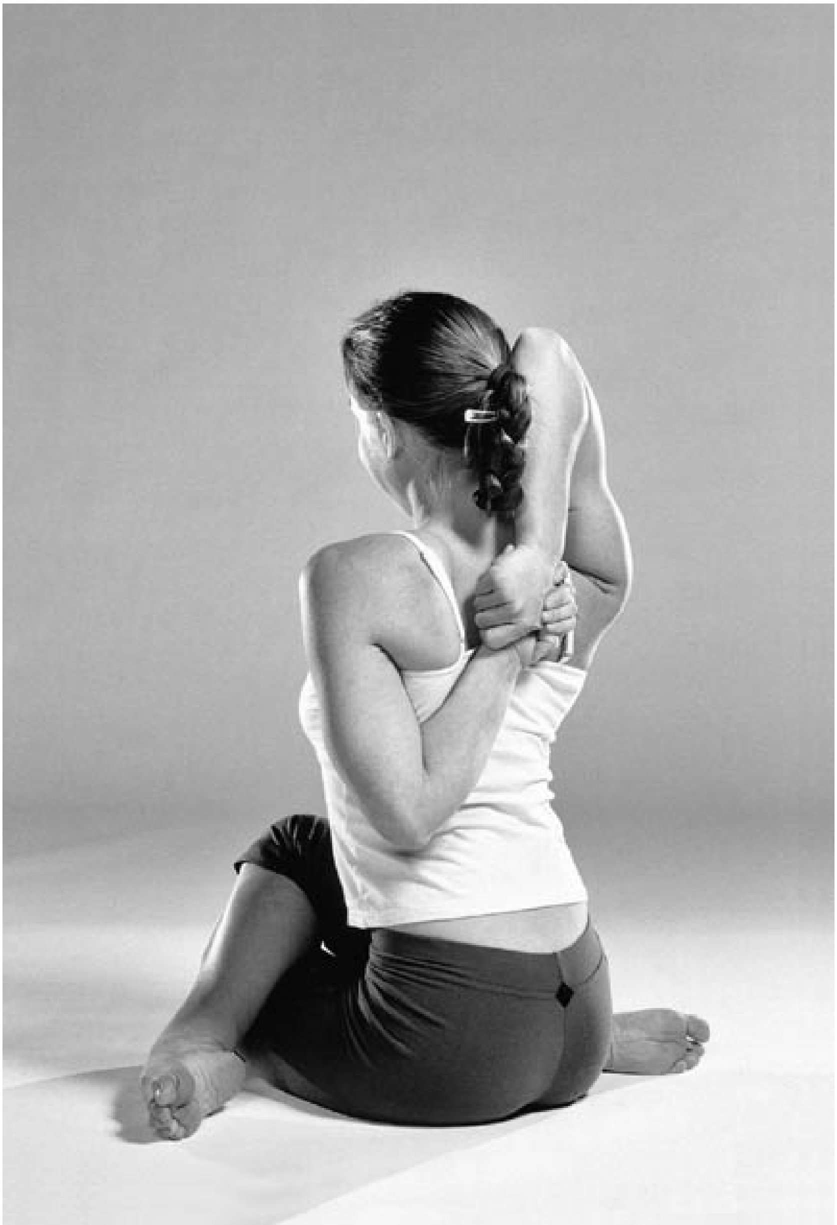
अत्याहारः प्रयासश्च प्रजल्पो नियमग्रहः ।
जनसङ्गश्च लौल्यं च षड्भिर्योगो विनश्यति ॥ 15

Yoga perishes by these six: overeating, overexertion, talking too much, performing needless austerities, socializing, and restlessness.

उत्साहात्साहसाद्धैर्यात्तत्त्वज्ञानाच्च निश्चयात् ।
जनसङ्गपरित्यागात्षड्भिर्योगः प्रसिद्ध्यति ॥ 16

Yoga succeeds by these six: enthusiasm, openness, courage, knowledge of the truth, determination, and solitude.

हठस्य प्रथमाङ्गत्वादासनं पूर्वमुच्यते ।
कुर्यात्तदासनं स्थैर्यमारोग्यं चाङ्गलाघवम् ॥ 17



वीरासन – Virasana

Asanas are described first because they are the first step of Hatha. They give steadiness, health, and lightness of body.

वसिष्ठाद्यैश्च मुनिभिर्मत्स्येन्द्राद्यैश्च योगिभिः ।
अङ्गीकृतान्यासनानि कथ्यन्ते कानिचिन्मया ॥ 18

I will describe some asanas endorsed by Vasishtha and other sages, and by Matsyendra and other yogis.

जानूर्वोरन्तरे सम्यक्कृत्वा पादतले उभे ।
ऋजुकायः समासीनः स्वस्तिकं तत्प्रचक्षते ॥ 19

Correctly place both soles of the feet inside the thighs and knees. Sit up straight. This is Svastikasana.

सव्ये दक्षिणगुल्फं तु पृष्ठपार्श्वे नियोजयेत् ।
दक्षिणेऽपि तथा सव्यं गोमुखं गोमुखाकृति ॥ 20

Put the right ankle on its left side beside the buttock. Likewise, put the left ankle on its right side. This is called Gomukhasana because it resembles a cow’s face.

एकं पादं तथैकस्मिन्विन्यसेदूरुणि स्थितम् ।
इतरस्मिंस्तथा चोरुं वीरासनमितीरितम् ॥ 21

Similarly, place one foot on top of one thigh, and the other thigh on top of the other foot. This is Virasana.



कूर्मासन – Kurmasana

गुदं निरुद्ध्य गुल्फाभ्यां व्युत्क्रमेण समाहितः ।
कूर्मासनं भवेदेतदिति योगविदो विदुः ॥ 22

Cover the anus with crossed ankles and sit motionless. Knowers of Yoga know that this is Kurmasana.[1]

पद्मासनं तु संस्थाप्य जानूर्वोरन्तरे करौ ।
निवेश्य भूमौ संस्थाप्य व्योमस्थं कुक्कुटासनम् ॥ 23

Settle in Padmasana. Put the hands between the knees and thighs. Place the hands on the earth. Lift into the sky. This is Kukkutasana.

कुक्कुटासनबन्धस्थो दोर्भ्यां संबध्य कन्धराम् ।
भवेत्कूर्मवदुत्तान एतदुत्तानकूर्मकम् ॥ 24

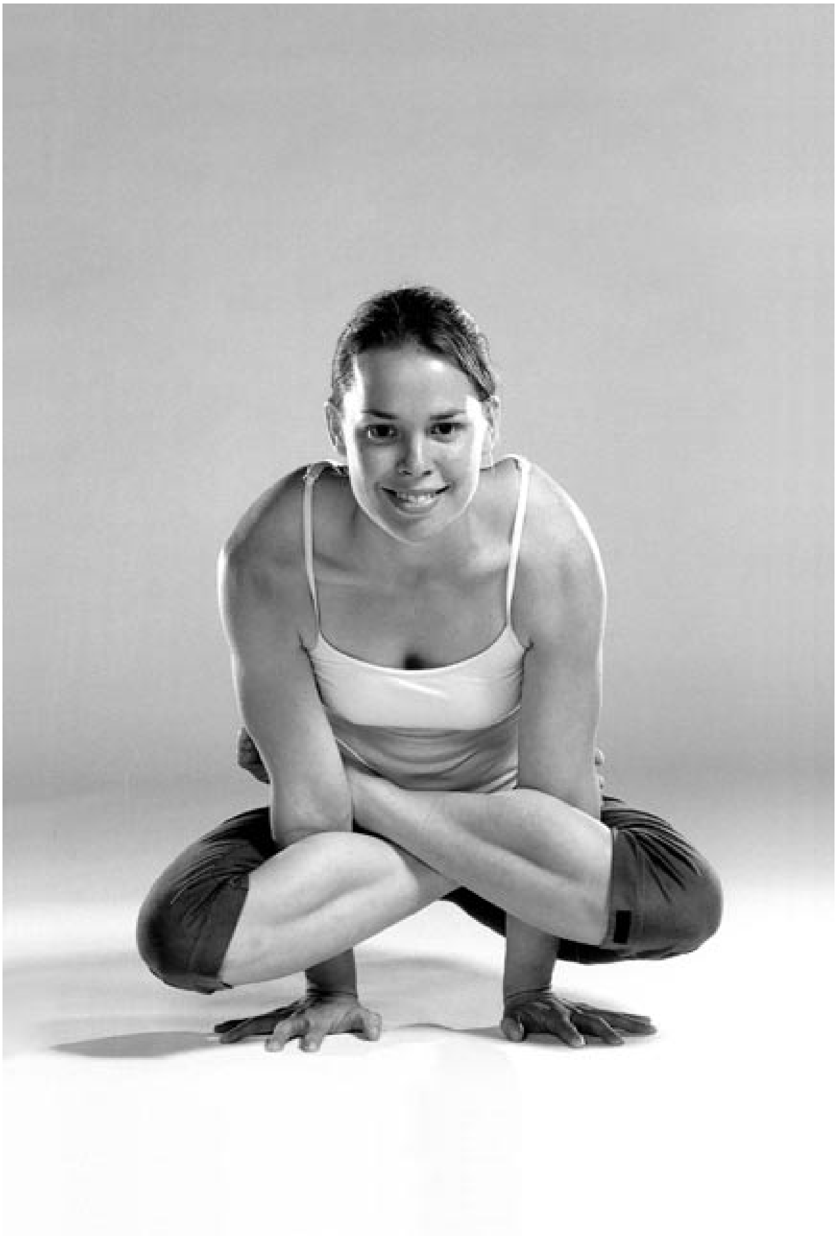
Assume Kukkutasana, join the neck with the hands, and lie on the back like a turtle. This is Uttanakurmasana.

पादाङ्गुष्ठौ तु पाणिभ्यां गृहीत्वा श्रवणावधि ।
धनुराकर्षणं कुर्याद्धनुरासनमुच्यते ॥ 25

Bring the big toes as far as the ears with both hands as if drawing a bow. This is Dhanurasana.

वामोरुमूलार्पितदक्षपादं जानोर्बहिर्वेष्टितवामपादम् ।

[1] The asana nowadays called Kurmasana no longer corresponds to this description. We have photographed the modern version.



कुक्कुटासन – Kukkutasana

प्रगृह्य तिष्ठेत्परिवर्तिताङ्गः श्रीमत्स्यनाथोदितमासनं स्यात् ॥ 26

Place the right foot at the root of the left thigh, and the left foot outside the right knee. Grasp the feet and twist the body. This is the asana taught by Sri Matsyanatha.

मत्स्येन्द्रपीठं जठरप्रदीप्तिं प्रचण्डरुग्मण्डलखण्डनास्त्रम् ।
अभ्यासतः कुण्डलिनीप्रबोधं चन्द्रस्थिरत्वं च ददाति पुंसाम् ॥ 27

This Matsyendrasana stimulates the appetite. It is a weapon which destroys a multitude of deadly diseases. Regular practice awakens the kundalini and firms the moon[2] in men.

प्रसार्य पादौ भुवि दण्डरूपौ दोर्भ्यां पदाग्रद्वितयं गृहीत्वा ।
जानूपरि न्यस्तललाटदेशो वसेदिदं पश्चिमतानमाहुः ॥ 28

Stretch both legs on the ground like sticks. Grasp the toes with both hands. Rest the forehead on the knees. This is Paschimatanasana.

इति पश्चिमतानमासनाग्र्यं पवनं पश्चिमवाहिनं करोति ।
उदयं जठरानलस्य कुर्यादुदरे कार्श्यमरोगतां च पुंसाम् ॥ 29

This Paschimatana is foremost among asanas. It reverses the breath's flow, kindles the fire of the stomach, flattens the belly, and brings good health to men.

[2] Discussion of this meaning of the word moon begins with verse 3.49.



उत्तानकूर्मासन – Uttanakurmasana

धरामवष्टभ्य करद्वयेन तत्कूर्परस्थापितनाभिपार्श्वः ।
उच्चासनो दण्डवदुत्थितः स्यान्मायूरमेतत्प्रवदन्ति पीठम् ॥ 30

Hold the earth with both hands. Place the sides of the navel on the elbows. Rise high above the ground like a stick. This is Mayurasana.

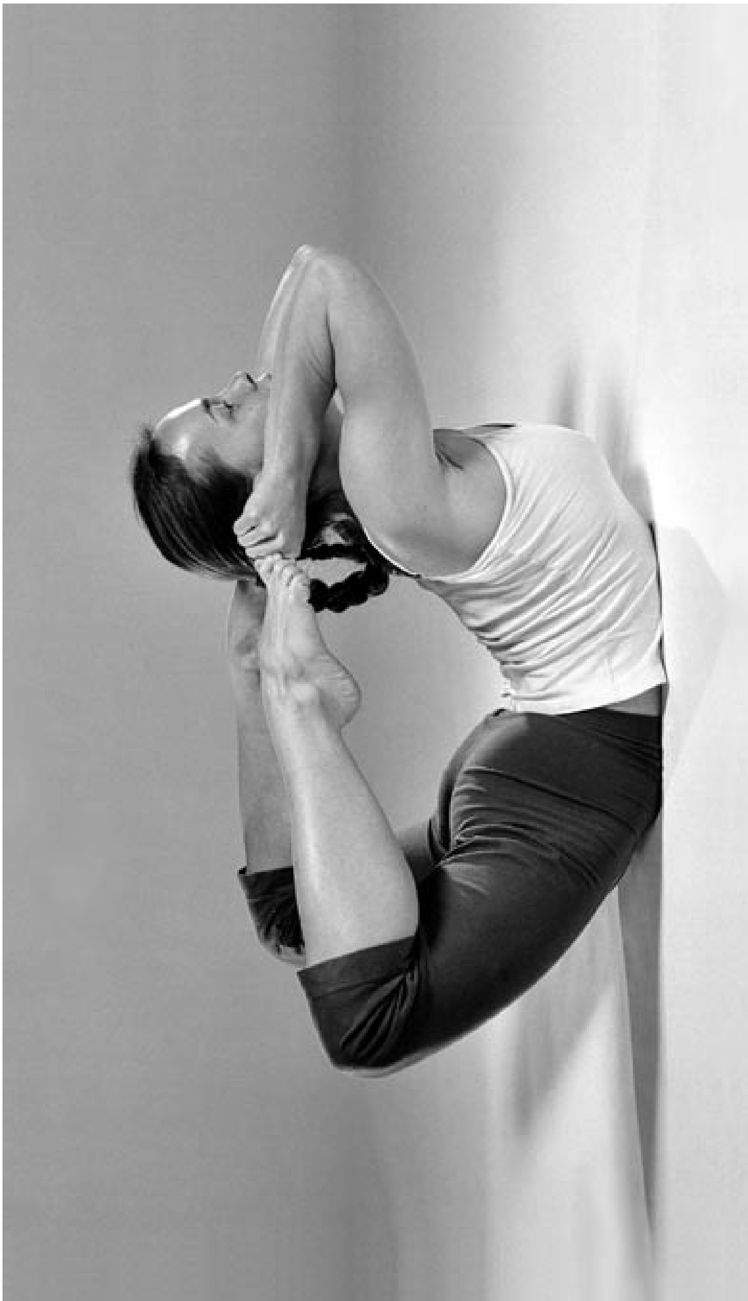
हरति सकलरोगानाशु गुल्मोदरादी-
नभिभवति च दोषानासनं श्रीमयूरम् ।
बहु कदशनभुक्तं भस्म कुर्यादशेषं
जनयति जठराग्निं जारयेत्कालकूटम् ॥ 31

The Sri Mayurasana overcomes defects and quickly destroys all diseases—enlargement of the spleen, enlargement of the abdomen, and so on. It stimulates the stomach's fire, incinerates all bad food, and makes the deadly Kalakuta poison digestible.

उत्तानं शववद्भूमौ शयनं तच्छवासनम् ।
शवासनं श्रान्तिहरं चित्तविश्रान्तिकारकम् ॥ 32

Lying on the back on the ground like a corpse is Shavasana. It removes fatigue and gives rest to the mind.

चतुरशीत्यासनानि शिवेन कथितानि च ।
तेभ्यश्चतुष्कमादाय सारभूतं ब्रवीम्यहम् ॥ 33



धनुरासन – Dhanurasana

Eighty-four asanas were taught by Shiva. Of those I shall describe the essential four.

सिद्धं पद्मं तथा सिंहं भद्रं चेति चतुष्टयम् ।
श्रेष्ठं तत्रापि च सुखे तिष्ठेत्सिद्धासने सदा ॥ 34

Siddha, Padma, Simha, and Bhadra—these four are the best. And of these, Siddhasana is always comfortable to maintain.

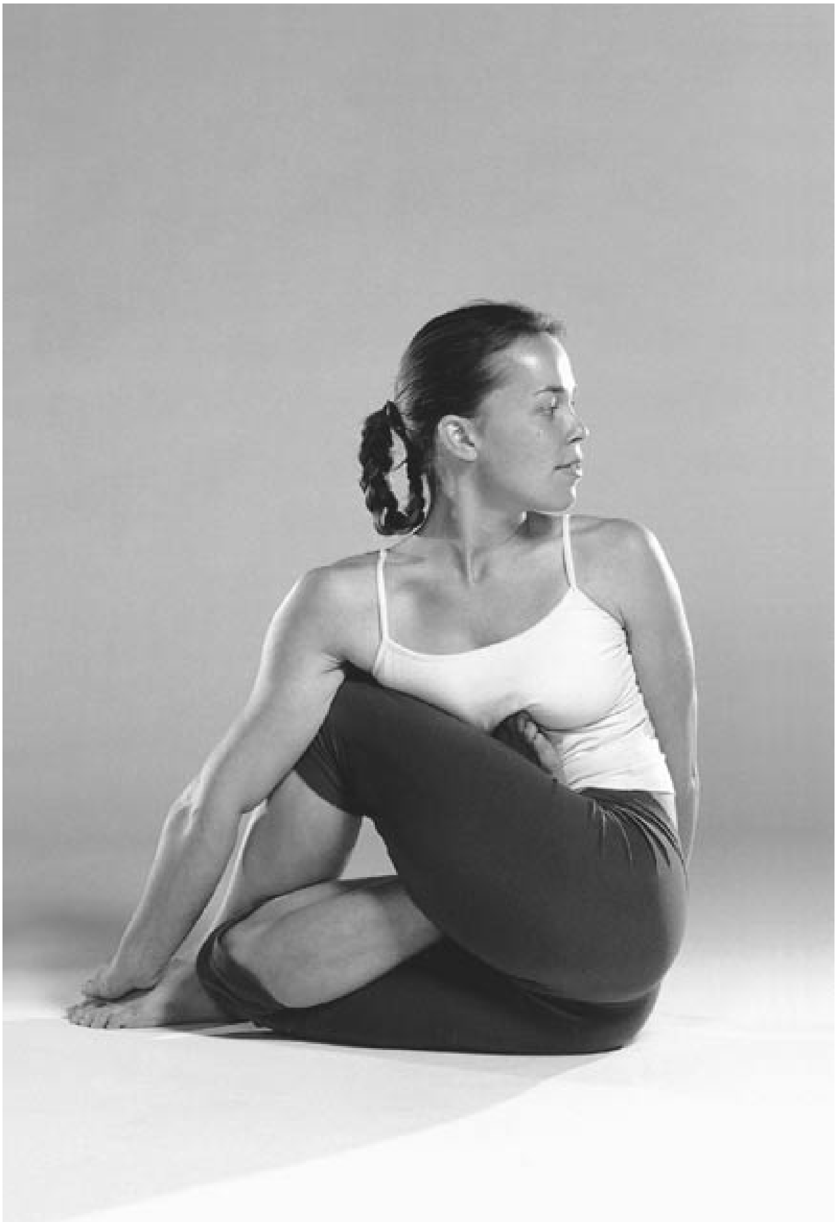
योनिस्थानकमङ्घ्रिमूलघटितं कृत्वा दृढं विन्यसे-
न्मेण्ढ्रे पादमथैकमेव हृदये कृत्वा हनुं सुस्थिरम् ।
स्थाणुः संयमितेन्द्रियोऽचलदृशा पश्येद्भ्रुवोरन्तरं
ह्येतन्मोक्षकपाटभेदजनकं सिद्धासनं प्रोच्यते ॥ 35

Press the perineum with the heel of the foot. Place the other foot above the penis. Hold the chin steady on the heart. Remain motionless. Restrain the senses. Look with a steady gaze between the eyebrows. This is Siddhasana. It opens the doors of liberation.

मेण्ढ्रादुपरि विन्यस्य सव्यं गुल्फं तथोपरि ।
गुल्फान्तरं च निक्षिप्य सिद्धासनमिदं भवेत् ॥ 36

Place the left ankle above the penis. Put the other ankle above the left foot. Some say this is Siddhasana.

एतत्सिद्धासनं प्राहुरन्ये वज्रासनं विदुः ।



मत्स्येन्द्रासन – Matsyendrasana

मुक्तासनं वदन्त्येके प्राहुर्गुप्तासनं परे ॥ 37

Some call this Siddhasana. Others know it as Vajrasana. Some say it is Muktasana. Others call it Guptasana.

यमेष्विव मिताहारमहिंसां नियमेष्विव ।
मुख्यं सर्वासनेष्वेकं सिद्धाः सिद्धासनं विदुः ॥ 38

The masters know that Siddhasana is the best of all asanas, just as moderate diet is the foremost yama and nonviolence is the fundamental niyama.

चतुरशीतिपीठेषु सिद्धमेव सदाभ्यसेत् ।
द्वासप्ततिसहस्राणां नाडीनां मलशोधनम् ॥ 39

Of the eighty-four asanas, always practice Siddhasana. It removes impurities from the seventy-two thousand nadis.

# Contributors

BRIAN DANA AKERS began practicing Hatha Yoga at age twelve, learning Sanskrit at seventeen, and working in publishing at twenty-three. You can find out more about him at BrianDanaAkers.com.

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